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DE RUEHUB #0440 1621916
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 101916Z JUN 08
FM USINT HAVANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3345
INFO RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0075
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 0014
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 0016
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 0005
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000440

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/10/2013
TAGS: [CU](#) [ECON](#) [ECPS](#) [KCIP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: GOC ANNOUNCES PLANNED CUBA-VENEZUELA FIBER OPTIC
CABLE

REF: HAVANA 283

Classified By: COM Michael E. Parmly for reason 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (U) The June 9, edition of Granma dedicated an entire page and a half to an article touting a joint Cuban-Venezuelan project to build a 1,550 km fiber optic cable from Cuba to Venezuela, with an intermediate stop in Jamaica. According to the article, the cable would run from La Guaira in Venezuela to Playa Siboney, just to the east of Santiago, in eastern Cuba. The cable will reportedly have two 320GB capacity lines, and will be in place by 2010. Future connections to Haiti and Nicaragua are also noted.

¶2. (U) Granma highlights that this is the first time that two Latin American countries have decided to take such an important step without the involvement of transnational companies that (presumably) are under the thumb of the USG. The article points out that there is already an extensive cable network in the Caribbean, and that one cable running from Miami to Cancun passes within 32 kilometers of the Malecon in Havana. It blames the US embargo for making it impossible for Cuba to hook up to these existing cables.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Cubans who attempt to work with the internet and the world wide web have urged us to do something to encourage a connection to existing undersea cable, arguing that to do so would contribute greatly to allowing Cubans to know and understand the world off the island better (REFTEL). Others have commented that they believe the regime has no intention of actually getting the newly-announced cable into operation. The regime desires the benefits that accrue from the publicity surrounding the announcement, but is not really interested in opening Cuba to the world via fiber optic cable.

¶4. (C) ACTION REQUESTED: We agree with those who say that electronic penetration of Cuba's information blockade would be an important step forward. We understand that the OFAC license to connect Cuba to the existing undersea cable is still valid, though the company that obtained it has gone out of business. We believe it would be worthwhile to let it be known that the license exists so that other investors might take advantage of it or, alternatively, to seek other licenses to do the same work.

PARMLY